

# FAULKNER STUDIES

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### A General Introduction

It may be a surprise to many recent devotees of the work of William Faulkner to know that serious Faulkner study goes back fifteen and even twenty years. Previous to the appearance of this criticism there was only the conviction of Sherwood Anderson and a few others that Faulkner's writings were a product of genius and that they should be published, whatever the critical or public response to his work.

From 1929 to 1940 Faulkner published a truly amazing body of work, probably not equaled by any other American writer in several generations, in such a short time as twelve years. During those years Faulkner was far from being unacknowledged. By 1936 he had won the distinction of being included in Merle Johnson's *American First Editions*, an indication that his books were bringing some premium upon the book auction market. Stories by Faulkner were included in the O'Brien collections for 1932, 1934, 1935; in the O'Henry Memorial Award volumes for 1931, 1932, 1934, 1936; in Robert Penn Warren's *A Southern Harvest* anthology.

The critical acclaim was sincere, devoted, often significant. Yet it must be noted that it was not widespread. There were a few good essays in small magazines and a few able reviews, but the most significant aspect of it was that some of the best critics of today were then beginning to feel the impact of Faulkner's work and asserting, at least orally, his great power and his probable position as the most distinguished American writer of fiction then producing. This conviction did not get into print widely, probably because those critics were wise enough not to rush into public statement without most careful study.

In the thirties critical appraisal of Faulkner had to be undertaken with care. The more-or-less-official criticism of the period was sociological, sometimes Marxist, sometimes history-of-ideas, in approach. The light skimming of Faulkner's ideas which this criticism encouraged often completely mistook the nature of his

work. Now, we stress the obverse in our recognition of the brilliant sociological import of the work, and perhaps we are nearly as much in error. The critical work of this time was various: it ranged from the obviously tour-de-force to the traditional; it ranged from the moments of greatest power to the awkward and the clearly bad. Faulkner's work required rereading and rethinking, because it was dense, complex. I recall that a well-known critic who recently published an appreciation of *Absalom, Absalom!* told me more than ten years ago that the Faulkner novel he most greatly admired was *The Sound and the Fury*; thus critical penetration had to continue and extend itself and be flexible enough to incorporate new meanings. Chief among those who held the greatest admiration for Faulkner were the men of the Southern Agrarian group, although Faulkner was not officially one of them; when their critical position prevailed, criticism of Faulkner became prevalent. Most of all, it was clear that Faulkner, probably more than any other writer of our time, was engaged in writing a *body* of material which was not completely self-contained, piece by piece. Perspective helped—and the publication of *The Hamlet* and of *Go Down, Moses* illuminated the whole design.

Meantime the Faulkner reputation was shaping slowly. Even in the early forties it lay a good bit outside published criticism. The books had not sold very well, with the exception of the most obviously sensational novel, *Sanctuary*. Faulkner students of the time will recall that the other works were brought out and sold for a year or eighteen months and then, very likely, remaindered. At the end of the war, if I am not badly mistaken, only one Faulkner title was in print, and that was the Modern Library *Sanctuary*. Paradoxically, his reputation at this time was the highest it had ever been; nevertheless interested persons were forced to seek out his novels on remainder lists. Even as late as the spring of 1946 I remember buying, in what is the country's

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best-known *avant garde* bookstore, two Faulkner titles at remainder prices.

Since the war Faulkner's work has been more often praised than not. Now we have Faulkner as perhaps the most important fad of the new literati. He is the subject of semi-polite conversation as well as of serious criticism.

Another recent fad—the revival of interest in F. Scott Fitzgerald—suggests an analogy. Is the general interest in Faulkner upon similar grounds? The answer is difficult, and I will not attempt it fully here. Undoubtedly, we are on safer grounds with Faulkner; his work is more extensive, and it is certainly more complex. It is indeed, now, an immense body which will keep the literary workers busy for many decades.

Such considerations lie behind the formation of this journal. When it was first announced to friends, the idea was met with both sympathy and derision. Interested persons felt the danger of establishing an organ of even semi-official nature, since they feared the stuffiness and ossification that usually attend such ventures.

It should be stated categorically that the intention of the originators of this magazine is to ward away such paralysis. The fan club already exists. The aim is to cast aside the fan club psychology and to get at the work as seriously as possible. The mere multiplication of "critical essays" will not help.

The purpose of this journal, then, is not adulatory, but rather to assert the true value of scholarly and critical study. To that purpose, the journal will reserve its pages as much as possible for the fundamentals of scholarly and critical study. Such an effort requires a thorough bibliography as a primary function—not merely a listing, but instead an effort to annotate dispassionately. Critical study needs application; so space will be available, not for the "critical essay" of pretense, but for the workmanlike analysis of symbolism, for cross-referencing, and for the multitude of minute problems which must be understood before the larger problems can be grasped. Such study requires a place for exchange of notes, observations, questions; therefore these pages will have an "Ideas and Queries" department.

Correspondence for the next and subsequent issues of *Faulkner Studies* is earnestly solicited, and any contributions will be welcomed. Address subscription fees, manuscripts, and all letters to *Faulkner Studies*, 1611 Adams Street, Denver 6, Colorado. (A. S.)

## IDEAS AND QUERIES

It is the editors' plan to devote one section of *Faulkner Studies* to an "Ideas and Queries" column. The contents of this column will be made up primarily of material which the editors receive from correspondents interested in expressing ideas or in raising questions on any of the Faulkner works. We visualize the "Ideas and Queries" column as one of the most valuable functions of the *Studies*. It is our hope that it will serve as a sort of central exchange, providing a medium that makes accessible ideas and questions that seem pertinent to our readers. In order to conserve space correspondents are asked to make the length of their statements or questions consistent with the format of the quarterly. Communications which, in the opinion of the editors, are not of general interest will be acknowledged by private correspondence. Address all contributions to *Faulkner Studies*, "Ideas and Queries," 1611 Adams Street, Denver 6, Colorado.

Since very little correspondence appropriate to this column was received in time to be included in this first issue, the editors have taken the opportunity of introducing a few ideas of their own. These will be concerned with *Requiem for a Nun*, certain aspects of which have thus far baffled and amazed even some of the most ardent Faulkner readers. Questions, objections or statements of agreement regarding what follows will be welcomed.

One of the most obvious tasks concerning *Requiem for a Nun* is to determine the relations between the prose sections and the play. It is certainly clear that in the prose sections Faulkner is acting as omniscient historian and that he here sees the historical process, as a whole, represented microcosmically in two very specific histories: those of the courthouse and the jail. Thus both of these buildings have a symbolic function in the work.

The courthouse came into being to solve a dilemma. As soon as Holston's lock was joined to the government mail pouch a bond was established between the heretofore independent, wilderness community and the federal government. When the lock disappeared in the jailbreak the community was faced with two alternatives: (1) charge off the lock on the government Indian-Affairs books in Ratcliffe's store or (2) somehow corrupt Pettigrew who, acting as federal agent, threatened federal punishment for the loss. Unfortunately, the latter alternative was adopted. Peabody went to Pettigrew and, promising that they would build



a town in honor of his (Pettigrew's) name—Jefferson—placated him and relieved the community from the threat of federal punishment.

Throughout this activity there is only one voice of protest—that of Ratcliffe's: "a single thin almost unheard voice crying thinly out of the roar of a mob: 'Wait, look here, listen—.' " But this voice (the voice of the Individual) is over-ridden and the county courthouse, "symbolic, repository and guardian of the aspirations and hopes," is undertaken and completed under the false logic that it was "bigger than any because it was the sum of all and, being the sum of all, it must raise all of their hopes and aspirations level with its own aspirant and soaring cupola." And in Ratcliffe's protesting voice there was "shame, bafflement, a little of anguish and despair like a man struggling with a congenital vice." But amidst the mutual sweat and dreamy enthusiasm of the working group Ratcliffe's voice was already "hopeless," and "already defeated." "It was not even the money any more now, the fifteen dollars. It was the fact that they had refused it and, refusing it, had maybe committed a fatal and irremediable error."

"Fatal and irremediable error" it was, for once constructed, this temple demands obedience and allegiance to the communal Law it represents. It demands sacrifice too: the relinquishing of the right of the individual conscience to act as final arbiter and judge. The loss of this right corrupts the individual and allows him to delegate responsibility for ethical judgment to Law, and the delegation of responsibility is "a congenital vice" in which our potential for ethical judgment and action declines and decays.

The history of our nation (and perhaps the history of all of Western civilization) is the history of the progress of this vice: The wilderness and the isolation it afforded have vanished; every group and every community have been bound, by rails and wires, into One—one huge union, the United States. The furious practical activity required to build this Union of communities and minds is falsely called "Progress." Falsely, because in reality it is only the progress of our "congenital vice"—the delegation of our individual, moral responsibility to Authority. We have built "one towering frantic edifice poised like a card-house over the abyss of the mortgaged generations."

The victims of the illusion of "progress" are, regretfully, forced to recognize that they have enemies, that certain individuals take exception to the common dream. These must be confined and punished. Thus—although the jail is almost forgotten and

shoved into the "backwaters" of the progressive community, which grows up around the citadel, the courthouse—the jail is nevertheless a necessity. The jail is even older than the town itself. And being older than all, "it has seen all: the mutation and the change." It has watched the widening trace of civilization encroach upon and corrupt the wilderness; it has seen the displacement of generation after generation, the displacement of all that is obsolete, all that stands in the way of the onrushing dream of "Progress" and the machinery of "Progress." And now, as Gavin Stevens says, looking into the records of the jail is like looking into an old mirror, a mirror in which we see the vicious history of our vice. The jail is a sort of nunnery in which, isolated and alone, the voice of the "I" can be heard and in which (so absorbing and demanding is our false effort) "poor sinning man" finds time "to compose, in the gross and simple terms of his gross and simple lusts and yearnings, the gross and simple recapitulations of his gross and simple heart."

Thus, acting in his prose chapters as omniscient historian, Faulkner finds that the historical process is essentially a struggle between the forces of "Progress" and mass-Law and the resources of the individual conscience.

\* \* \* \* \*

The play shows this historical process being acted out in contemporary life. Temple's sin is an example of the universal sin and therefore, in the initial scenes of the drama, she strives to deny responsibility for her past and fails to see how her past is related to the tragedy. In Act I, Scene II, she is obviously more involved in revenge than bereavement because, by believing in the integrity and righteousness of her revenge, she hopes to save herself from self-recognition—which would place on her shoulders a burden of guilt.

Gavin's prodding, however, finally provokes the dialectic of Act I, Scene III, in which Temple is torn between the desire to preserve herself from recognition of her past sins (and the fact that they contributed to the destruction of her own child) and her desire for the purgation of confession. Having accomplished this much, Gavin, continuing to act as the goad of Reason, succeeds in bringing about the painful confession of Act II, Scene I, at the Governor's office. It is during this process (in which, as Mr. Robert Penn Warren remarks, "the mass of material to be narrated clogs the dramatic outline") that Temple learns that appeal to Law (the Governor) cannot save her from the necessity of recognizing her own conscience. Even the Governor under-



stands this and (casting aside his symbolic status) gives up his chair to Gowan, indicating that Temple's confession is not appropriate for the ears of the Law. Gowan is shown the nature of his own sin (exacting gratitude from Temple when he himself was unworthy of it) by being present at his wife's confession. Both husband and wife achieve a degree of self-recognition and thereby establish at least a basis for redemption.

Perhaps the above will serve as a summary of the *effect* of Nancy's action. But our analysis cannot stop here, for the effect of her action and the *intent* of her action must be distinguished. This is one of the chief problems in the play and, unless it can be resolved, the entire symbolic structure of the play is threatened. What follows is by no means a satisfactory "resolution," but possibly it will suggest a method.

The intention behind Nancy's act was not to "save" Temple's soul but to preserve the innocence of the children. Nancy tells us this in Act II, Scene II: "I aint talking about your husband. I aint even talking about you. I'm talking about two little children."

The effect of her act is not preconceived but, on the contrary, is supremely individual and intuitive—i.e., it is not pre-rationalized in the light of any logic or Law. This fact somewhat mitigates the evil of her act, but it by no means exonerates her from guilt. Nancy herself admits this and when asked if she be guilty or not guilty, emphatically replies—not to the court but to her God—"Guilty, Lord." And here we touch again upon the theme of the prose sections, because Nancy's confession of guilt is evidence that the responsibility for her act will be assumed by her conscience, which for Temple has the effect of "disrupting and confounding and dispersing and flinging back two thousand years, the whole edifice of corpus juris and rules of evidence we have been working to make stand up by itself ever since Caesar."

Nancy finds her admission quite the opposite of "disrupting." In the admission of guilt there is not only suffering but ecstasy too, for by admitting her guilt to Him, Nancy simultaneously admits her necessity and contingency, and thereby concedes that *He is*. Suffering a recognition of our guilt is a "gift" that He has given to us so that we will come to recognize Him and be comforted in our recognition. As Nancy says: "He dont tell you to suffer. But he gives you the chance." Nancy rests secure in the belief that her suffering is known to Him. Without this belief our conscience is infinitely corruptible and there is no salvation. (J.R.B.)

## REVIEWS

Hoffman, Frederick J., and Vickery, Olga W., editors, *William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism*. East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1951. 280 pp.

The book edited by Hoffman and Vickery presents a remarkable cross-section of essays dealing with various aspects of Faulkner's work, as well as with certain biographical data which will serve eventually as part of the personal myth of the man, William Faulkner. The essays are, upon the whole, valid and perceptive, if necessarily incomplete, attempts to penetrate to the spirit and law of an epic mythmaker. The problem is again and again rephrased by each critic, almost all of whom recognize the peculiar necessity of its comprehension—and also the prime difficulty. This critical problem may be stated in various ways, but it resides in the complexity and multifariousness of the form. How is one to understand Faulkner the mythmaker: as dramatist, as historian, as novelist, as moralist, or metaphysician? Clearly, the form of the works as a whole does not support any single formal thesis, except possibly that of the poetic. For Faulkner is a poet, in the only real sense of that word. He deals with ambiguity of all kinds, forces ambiguity, compounds and diffuses it, leaving all paths which might conceivably lead to an already discovered destination. Poetry is the known language of myth; it is synthetic, but not merely synthetic—it is dialectic. The problem is enhanced in Faulkner's work by his attempt to recreate dramatically as well as epically the conscience of his race; there is a fusion of forms. His is the first major attempt since Melville to place America in the great tradition of human-descent, to relieve us of the terrible oppression of isolation (see his Nobel prize speech), and at the same time to show us the mirror of the future wherein this mythical tradition meets its test, its Golgotha. The form consequently is fluid, overlapping, never coming to rest, creating its own antitheses and syntheses.

It is not remarkable that many of the critics in this volume tend to pre-empt form in their discussions, and since this is the case, it is understandable that many of them feel impelled to excise from the whole fabric one novel which they consider ultimately superior while finding the other books "significant failures." It is significant that there is little critical agreement upon which specific novel should be so exalted. The other alternative is to forget form and concentrate on the meaning of the works in esthetic isolation. Either method is hedged in with necessary failures of interpretation.



In some ways, the most incredibly perceptive essay in the book is that by the Frenchman, Rabi, whose point-of-view escapes regionalistic limitations. It is possible to quarrel with some of his conclusions, since they amount to conclusions, but it is next to impossible to deny his cogency as symbolic interpreter. More nearly than anyone else, he seems to recognize the universality of Faulkner's myth—that the southern United States is only the prop of the myth. The least satisfactory is probably that of Elizabeth Hardwick, but her essay is more in the nature of a review of a novel (*Intruder in the Dust*) than a critical evaluation of the works. Jean-Paul Sartre, who is a very acute philosopher, seems to misconstrue Faulkner's metaphysic, though his insights are valuable. There is an extremely valuable study of Faulkner's humor, which somehow loses force as the author attempts to treat humor in isolation, as if it were the single catalyst. Conrad Aiken's discussion of style and technique is indispensable. To mention only a few of the essayists at random, George Marion O'Donnell's critique, though probably obsolete in some points (particularly with regard to his interpretation of Faulkner's great novel, *Pylon*), remains the early classic of Faulknerian criticism. The essays by Warren and Chase may be singled out as particularly fine examples of straightforward criticism, although both essays are, as the authors avow, in the nature of prefaces. The introduction is both very informative and very discerning; the essay by Olga Vickery is certainly one of the finest of the lot—it is perceptive and conscientious without intruding into the discussion some species of doctrine. One may hope that in another decade, a book fully this large may succeed the present volume, and that in the meantime we shall have a book-length critical biography which has incorporated many of the valuable insights of these essays into it, as well as the insights contained in other essays which this book could not include. This, along with Malcolm Cowley's masterful effort in compiling the *Portable Faulkner*, certainly constitutes the best contemporary compendium on Faulkner, and is likely to remain one of the best fruits of the "New Criticism." (J.R.M.)

Campbell, Harry Modean, and Foster, Ruel E., *William Faulkner: A Critical Appraisal*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951. 183 pp.

There is an anomaly in the existence of this magazine. It is not unusual for an organization to be formed after an artist's

death for the careful revaluation of an artist's words, or his ideas, or even both. But this magazine has as its primary purpose the interpretation of a living author. Yet it is necessary, for William Faulkner received the most considerable overt recognition that the Western world has to offer at a time when he was virtually unknown in his own country.

Actually the process of accumulation of knowledge is proceeding at a rapid rate, and this writer will play his part by generalizing about trends, suggesting new directions, or simply viewing with alarm. . . .

In the new Campbell and Foster book which has appeared on Faulkner, this reader thinks he sees not much to view with alarm, but a great deal that suggests the need for new directions.

The authors set themselves a modest enough aim: "to trace the continuity in theme and style in Faulkner's work in such a fashion that a reader with neither the time nor the inclination to read all his work will be aware of the filiations of any novel he may read with the themes and techniques of the rest." This is designed to spread light where light is clearly necessary, in the handbook fashion.

I think the study will succeed in achieving what it set out to do; it will be a guide for many readers. I am rather sorry for them. I think they will miss the fuss and furor and fun of digging for character relationships and thematic connections. But these books designed to lead the uninitiated must always satisfy readers who are already interested, and I am not sure how well this study will stand up at that level. The chapter division, by subject, makes it easy to see where weaknesses may lie.

The chapter on imagery is clearly useful. The authors are insistent that imagery and, in the broader sense, style are the very essence of Faulkner's material. This is not surprising, but it is good that it be said.

I felt less happy about the chapter on "Dream as Symbolic Act." It is never quite clear just what is being said about the relations between Faulkner and Freud. Are the authors suggesting that Faulkner was using the Freudian apparatus? Or are they simply accounting for what Faulkner did do in terms of the Freudian "co-ordinates"? In the first case, they are saying that Faulkner is a Freudian disciple. In the second they are only saying they are Freudian disciples. Agreement or disagreement is not the issue. I merely want to know much more clearly than I do just what the authors intended to say on the point.

Then, secondly, I wonder if the principle of parsimony



should not be invoked. Unless the authors are themselves thoroughgoing believers in psychoanalysis, they must explain in the most direct, not the most involved, way the phenomena they observed. Frequently, if not always, these phenomena can be accounted for in simpler terms: Faulkner might be exploiting associations, conditioning, and not at all the specialized Freudian machinery.

I thought the analysis of themes in the fourth chapter good. The authors saw thematic connections, understanding not only individual purposes but also the concept of purpose.

I cannot question the usefulness of the chapter on humor, despite its limitations. It is an old cliché that humor is the most difficult of all modes to analyze. The authors try. They divided humor into the "Mark Twain" type, and the surrealist type: All right perhaps, although the term surrealist refers to a school of writing—not a kind of humor. But gradations within the "surrealist" were not considered, so that there was no way to analyze humor as high satire or cosmic irony. I felt very strongly that the authors themselves appreciated this use of humor, but no analysis was forthcoming: they did not seem to have a set of necessary tools. For this they are not to be blamed since no satisfactory set has ever been devised, but it does mean there is a job still to be done.

The chapter on cosmic pessimism, a study of the philosophical implications of Faulkner's work, is an ambitious effort. One thing only—does not the term cosmic imply that there is some optimism in the pessimism? To say cosmic is to assume a *universal order*, and is that not already optimism?

Now I know it is pleasant to play with words, but rather meaningless. Let me put it differently. Some of my friends insist, as their entire generation did, that every book have "uplift." They say that they find it in Faulkner, and they read him with understanding. Does not this suggest that there is an additional level of tone, or atmosphere, or implication, which this chapter does not take into account? Again, I think the collaborators did very well; but there is more to be done.

One might add that the analysis of *The Bear* and the chapter on primitivism were fine. I shall re-read *The Bear*, I feel sure, with greater understanding.

This is too carping a criticism, perhaps, but I hope a useful one. The limitations of this book are the limitations, by and large, of Faulkner criticism today. The virtues are clearly those of the authors. (A.M.I.F.)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

In an effort to present an exhaustive bibliography of Faulkner criticism, the editors have deemed it proper and necessary to use as the bases for such a compilation the available sources found in the following publications: *William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism*, edited by Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery; "Faulkner's Critics: A Selective Bibliography," by John L. Longley and Robert Daniel, (*Perspective*: 3:202-08, Autumn, 1950); "A Selected Bibliography of Critical Works on William Faulkner," by Bradley T. Perry, (*University of Kansas City Review*: 18:159-64, Winter, 1951).

Our bibliography columns will print first data on critical material which these base sources do *not* list. After this task is completed we will work back into the base sources themselves, the eventual aim being a complete bibliography of Faulkner criticism. Whenever possible, the essays and reviews and books will be annotated for the convenience of the reader, and, in some cases, unpublished material on Faulkner will also be furnished with annotations. As everyone experienced in bibliography knows, such an effort at completeness will entail much research. Friends and subscribers are therefore invited to submit names of articles which may have eluded the vigilance of our bibliographers.

Breit, Harvey, "William Faulkner." *Atlantic Monthly*, 88:53-56, October, 1951.

Breit talks about the difficulty of reading Faulkner. He recommends an order in which to read the novels and short stories. Breit states that Faulkner helps us to remember and to understand the human situation in its particularity, and thus in its universality. He helps us to become more human. (E.J.)

Brooks, Cleanth, "*Absalom, Absalom!*: The Definition of Innocence," *Sewanee Review*, 59:543-58, Autumn, 1951.

Sutpen is characterized by "innocence," in an age-old yet particularly modern sense—he is secularized, rationalistic, scientific, not traditional, not religious, not even superstitious. By contrast to his strong, willed devotion to his "design," Henry and Judith become human within Faulkner's fundamentally orthodox conception of Man—in terms of original sin, grace, love, and expiation. Yet Faulkner does not glorify irrationality. Sutpen, like MacBeth, is a gigantic, strong, even heroic figure; his story is tragedy. (A.S.)



Cowley, Malcolm, "In Which Mr. Faulkner Translates Past Into Present," *New York Herald Tribune Book Review*, (September 30, 1951), 28:7 (rev. *Requiem for a Nun*).

Considers *Requiem* as a product of "the reformed Faulkner, conscious of his moral duties." Thus the play itself is "a drama conceived on a level of moral consciousness" with result that Temple will live the rest of her life "as a morally responsible being." Suggests that Nancy might have saved Temple and Bucky "without sacrificing a baby that had a right to its own salvation." Purpose of narrative sections is two fold: shows that the past survives in the present; gives the dramatic action "a sense of historical depth." (*J.R.B.*)

Hoffman, Frederick J., *The Modern Novel in America*. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951. pp. 26-27, 154-164, 201-202.

Discussion of Faulkner's preoccupation with form, his conception of time and his very complex moral insight into his characters, auctorial discipline and versatility of style. In Mr. Hoffman's opinion, Faulkner shares with Hemingway and Fitzgerald the front rank of recent novelists of "impressive merit and stature." The author indicates, however, that the best achievements of Henry James and Edith Wharton have not yet been equaled during the first half of this century. (*T.E.F.*)

Howe, Irving, "Faulkner: An Experiment in Drama," *Nation*, 173:263-264, September 28, 1951.

Howe's review of *Requiem* is balanced between enthusiasm and disparagement. He admires the narrative sections, but feels the dramatic sections do not come off as a play. He is particularly impressed by the jail section and feels it may serve as "a valedictory to [Faulkner's] world." Comments favorably on the fact that "all Faulkner's recent books reveal an intense concern with the Negroes. . . . This and not his much quoted philosophical sermons . . . is the sign of his strength as a novelist and moralist." (*A.M.I.F.*)

Howe, Irving, "The Southern Myth and William Faulkner," *American Quarterly*, 3:357-62, Winter, 1951.

Writers in the South have had ubiquity of subject matter, the defeat of the homeland. Serious writing came, however, from the region only when the South as a region began to decay, when its writers were forced to look back upon a past that was irretrievable and forward to a future that seemed intolerable. Faulkner has engaged in long examination of the Southern myth, setting his pride in the past against his despair over the present. (*A.S.*)

Lewis, R. W. B., "The Hero in the New World: William Faulkner's *The Bear*," *The Kenyon Review*, 13:641-60, Autumn, 1951.

This essay is a revealing study of Faulkner's little masterpiece. Lewis likens the fourth section in which Ike McCaslin broods over his family to the "transfiguring moments" in Virgil and Homer when the heroes encounter their ancestors and know their futures. He compares Faulkner to Melville and Twain. Lewis divides Faulkner's Time into two segments: "... *The Bear* may thus . . . be compared to the transition from the pagan to the Christian era, if not from the Old to the New Testament." Ike McCaslin is a Christ-like character since he has transmuted Power into Charity. Ike (unlike Quentin Compson of *The Sound and the Fury*, viz., the pagan view) represents a man who "moves in a world of light," and we have here a "new world in which values have been confirmed by being raised to a higher power." Ike is thus able, unlike Quentin, to see the past clearly. Indispensable for any study of *The Bear*. (J.R.M.)

O'Connor, William Van, "The State of Faulkner Criticism," *Sewanee Review*, 60:180-86, Winter, 1952 (review of *William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism*).

Van O'Connor like Lewis finds Faulkner's work dividing naturally into two main sections, those works such as *The Sound and the Fury*, *Light in August*, *Pylon*, and *The Wild Palms* (representing Old Testament violence), and those works such as *Go Down, Moses* and *Requiem for a Nun* (representing "attempts to elevate political programs and sermons into . . . art forms"). Van O'Connor discusses the values of the essays in the book with good insight into their merits. He warns against overstressing historical and sociological or regional aspects of Faulkner's fiction. "Faulkner criticism should have as its major focus his themes, stated as universal problems, and the manner in which he realizes these themes as fiction." (A valuable critique.) (J.R.M.)

Pfaff, William, "The Future That Is Already Here," *The Commonwealth*, 54:601, September 28, 1951.

In reviewing *Requiem for a Nun*, Mr. Pfaff discovers that "Faulkner says about all that it is necessary to say about the part of today that yesterday is." Faulkner, he states, is a "great moralist, obsessed by the silent murders of personality and of character," and that the theme of the history of Yoknapatawpha County is "people have borne anything." (T.E.F.)



Pritchett, V. S., "Vogue of Faulkner," *New Statesman and Nation*, 41:624-26, June 2, 1951.

"Faulkner's ambition is poetic and he is attempting the instantaneous delivery of total experience . . . not only the physical life, but all the historical and imaginative allusions of a culture at the same time. . . . Faulkner seems to be engaged in a compulsive task, as if he had undertaken awkwardly the building of a culture out of its ruins, as a one-man mission." (Reviews *Soldiers' Pay*.) (E.J.)

Smith, Harrison, "Purification by Sacrifice," *Saturday Review of Literature*, 34:12, September 29, 1951.

A review of *Requiem* indicating briefly the importance of the prose sections in illuminating the drama. How Temple, Gowen and Gavin can understand the "dignity and purity of the murderess's conception" remains in doubt to the reviewer. Their motives, like Nancy's, appear equally "unbalanced." On the stage, however, the play "might become one of the most remarkable dramas of our times." (T.E.F.)

Sullivan, Walter, "The Tragic Design of *Absalom, Absalom!*," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 50:552-66, October, 1951.

Mr. Sullivan is concerned with subjecting the novel to the test of the theories of tragedy developed by the great estheticians. First he establishes his position that *Absalom, Absalom!* is the "complete statement of Southern ambition, execution and success, guilt, doom, and destruction, as exemplified by the action of one man." Then he draws the statement of purpose from Aristotle's statement of catharsis, and proceeds to "test" *Absalom, Absalom!* by definitions of Hegel, Schopenhauer, and, more sketchily, Nietzsche. He analyzes the structure of the novel, and evaluates it according to the dicta of Freytag and Bradley. He finally decides that "even though *Absalom, Absalom!* does not effect a full scale 'purgation,' it establishes the tragic theme . . . common to Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha novels." (A.M.I.F.)

Warren, Robert Penn, "The Redemption of Temple Drake," *New York Times Book Review*, (September 30, 1951), 56:39 (rev. *Requiem for a Nun*).

An excellent summary and criticism of the play as a play. Adeptly points out that Temple "is trapped into salvation by tragedy," and that for her (as is true in all of Faulkner's work) "the past is not even past"—i.e., our past actions return and enter into our present motivation. Suggests that the play can be considered a sort of "closet drama," because—especially in the scene at Governor's office—"the mass of ma-

terial to be narrated clogs the dramatic outline." Claims that "the act of Nancy Mannigoe is shocking and implausible," and that the symbolic meaning of her act is "somewhat dry and schematic." Brevity of review may account for insufficient discussion of Nancy's act and for limited treatment of relations between prose sections and play. (J.R.B.)

Warren, Robert Penn, "William Faulkner and His South," (paper given for the First Peters Rushton Seminar in Contemporary Prose and Poetry, University of Virginia). Unpublished Manuscript.

Robert Penn Warren discusses with the special perception of a novelist who has long been close to Faulkner some basic patterns in the works: the pattern of Original Sin of which slavery is a manifestation, and the pattern of redemption through love of which Isaac McCaslin is the exemplar. Original Sin, in its broadest aspects, consists of a misappropriation of Nature. Nothing can be owned and held by exploitation: "... reality cannot be bought. It can only be had by love." Warren adds: "More exploitation without love is always avenged because the attitude which commits the crime in itself leads to its own punishment, so that man finally punishes himself." Warren concludes: "That is the central fact in Faulkner's work, the recognition of the common human bond, a profound respect for the human. There are no villains, except those who deny the human bond." An important and distinguished essay. (J.R.M.)

West, Ray B., Jr., "William Faulkner: Artist and Moralist," *Western Review*, 16:162-67, Winter, 1952.

This is a review of *Requiem* with some sideglances at the recent reprint of *Sartoris*. On the whole, Mr. West does not feel that this particular experiment in form was successful. He is left dissatisfied by all three of the main characters, Temple, Nancy, and Gavin Stevens. The review makes generalizations about Faulkner art in general. "Their value [any Faulkner novel] exists, first of all, in each novel as an individual work, but there has been an increasing accumulation of value in the total production; so that the reader has become accustomed to reading each work . . . with an eye for an over-all social import as well as for its specific worth as a single work of art." (A.M.I.F.)

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